

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH UNIT

ALAN R. KRONER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"WHEREAS, the legislative branch of government early lost its supremacy in America to the judicial branch and currently is threatened by the dominance of the executive branch; and

"WHEREAS, the legislative process is more fundamental than the judicial, which interprets it, and the executive, which enforces it; and

"WHEREAS, a disproportionate part of legislative sessions is consumed in awaiting formulation of basic legislation, the energy of large numbers of legislators being meantime diverted from their professions and livelihoods; and

"WHEREAS, such legislative planning and formulation as actually obtains would, by being recognized and made properly antecedent to regular sessions, conserve legislative time, save unnecessary expense, improve ensuing debate, and restore legislative activity to the high place in government and public esteem which it merits; and

"WHEREAS, the State of Illinois should lead rather than follow in such laudable restoration, now therefore

"Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:

"Section 1. There is hereby created a legislative council . . ."

-1937 Law creating the Legislative Council

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH UNIT

Overview

The Legislative Research Unit (LRU) has served as the central non-partisan general research agency of the General Assembly for over 70 years. Every state legislature has some office similar to the LRU, though the names and range of duties vary considerably.

The agency's current responsibilities stem mainly from two predecessor agencies: the Legislative Council, established in 1937 and renamed the LRU in 1984; and the Illinois Commission on Inter-governmental Cooperation (ICIC), also established in 1937 and merged with the LRU in 2003. The ICIC was created to promote cooperation among Illinois and other states, the federal government, and units of local government.

An unsuccessful effort was made to create a legislative council in 1913. That bill would have created both a research and bill drafting commission; it was modified to create only the Legislative Reference Bureau (for bill drafting). Another attempt was made in 1935 to create the Council, but it wasn't until 1937 that efforts were successful.



The Legislative Council was created, in part, to "restore legislative activity to the high place in government and public esteem which it merits." The Council was championed by Senator T.V. Smith (D-Chicago) to help new legislators comprehend "the business of a modern state" and make legislative sessions more efficient. It was initially created for a period of 4 years; but was temporarily extended for another 2 years, before being made permanent in 1943.

The purpose of this essay is to briefly describe how and when the major functions of the office were established.

The Legislative Council

As created, the Council's duties included collecting information; researching constitutional provisions, previous statutes, and issues of public policy and statewide interest; and making recommendations for change and proposing bills that the General Assembly could consider.

Although under the Constitution the General Assembly is a branch of government co-equal to the Judicial and Executive, in practice it did not have the staff or other resources to assert that position in a meaningful way. Therefore, when the Council approved studies, recommendations for change, and bill proposals, they carried significant weight. Over time, and especially with the expansion and professionalization of caucus staff in the 1970s, and consolidation of legislative agencies under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1984, the emphasis shifted from approval of formal recommendations, to delivery of research done for specific legislators on request to use as they saw fit. A 1969 law noted the shift in emphasis. This remains one of the core functions of the LRU.

Legislative Printing Unit

In 1961, a revolving fund was created for the Council to provide services to legislative committees and commissions. In 1965, a legislative service unit was statutorily added to the Council to provide various services to legislative committees and commissions. A 1977 law clarified that the services provided were printing, including daily calendars, amendments, conference committee reports, etc. The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1984 split off the Legislative Printing Unit as a separate legislative agency.

Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program (ILSIP)

In 1967, administration of a legislative staff internship program (started in 1961 with a grant from the Ford Foundation) was added to the Council's responsibilities. A sponsoring committee advised the Council on the program. Today, the LRU contracts with the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) to recruit and pay interns. Interns work full-time for a caucus staff or the LRU for ten and a half months and receive 8 hours of graduate credit from UIS. It is generally considered one of the premiere state legislative intern programs in the country. Former interns include one governor (Edgar), several members of Congress and the General Assembly, and numerous judges and other public officials.

New Members' Conference; District Office Staff Conference

Also in 1967, the Council was authorized to hold a conference for newly elected members of the General Assembly after each general election. The conference continues to be held biennially today. In 1995, the LRU also started holding a biennial conference for district office staff, to have them interact with agency representatives to learn about programs of interest to constituents. Each conference is accompanied by a publication.

Legislative Information Booth

In 1967, the Council began organizing volunteers to staff a Legislative Information Booth on the 3rd floor in the State House on session days. The booth was removed in 2006 due to renovations of the Capitol.

Constitutional Convention

During the 1969-70 Constitutional Convention, the Council issued weekly summaries of the convention's activities and the legislative history of each proposal. Beginning in 2004 and completed in 2007, the LRU prepared and made available (online and on CD) a free, searchable document of all 8,000 pages of the convention's transcripts. Because the Illinois Constitution requires an automatic referendum on whether to call a new convention, in 2008 the LRU posted a detailed website with hard-to-find information on the original convention, the 1988

automatic referendum and committee recommendations, and issues of interest in 2008.

Science Unit

In 1973, with assistance from the National Science Foundation, the Council was one of the first legislative agencies in the country to establish a science research unit. The LRU continues to maintain a scientist and science intern on staff to assist with science related policy questions.

Oral History Program

In 1979, the General Assembly authorized the LRU to contract with Sangamon State University (now UIS) for an Oral History Program, which prepared 34 oral histories of legislators over the next 8 years.

Filing of Reports With the LRU

A 1983 law required that whenever a law or resolution requires reporting to the General Assembly, the report must be filed with the Council; and the Council must provide to the General Assembly abstracts and indexes of reports received. The intent was that members receive only reports they order, if they are interested after reading an abstract. Abstracts and indexes of reports received are published four times per year in the LRU newsletter, *First Reading*. In practice, having the LRU publish abstracts of reports has had no impact on reducing the number of reports sent to members of the General Assembly.

Tracking Legislative and Executive Appointments

The Governor makes as many as 3,000 appointments to over 500 boards and commissions. Legislative leaders are often authorized to make similar, though fewer, appointments. In order to help legislative leaders keep track of their appointments, and provide legislative oversight of gubernatorial appointments, a 1989 law required that board and commission appointments be reported to the LRU. The LRU continues to maintain this information in a computerized database, and issues various reports throughout the year.

Publications

In addition to providing legislators and staff 500 or more research reports per year, the LRU publishes as many as 35,000 copies of two dozen publications. Some are periodicals, such as our *First Reading* newsletter (4 times a year), *Grant Alerts* (12 times per year), and periodic reports on federal aid and appointment tracking. Others are published once per year or biennium, such as the *Illinois Tax Handbook for Legislators*, *Directory of State Officials*, *Preface to Lawmaking*, and *Catalog of State Assistance to Local Governments*. Some publications, such as the *1970 Illinois Constitution Annotated for Legislators*, *Laws for Youth*, etc., are updated and published periodically, usually every few years.

Internet Homepage

In 2000 the LRU developed its first presence on the Internet with an agency homepage. Visitors to the LRU's website (including members of the general public) could find and access many of the agency's publications which, previously, were only available in printed copy on a limited basis. LRU staff continues to work towards making more publications of all types available electronically, both via e-mail and for download on the LRU's Internet homepage. In 2009 the LRU offered subscribers to its monthly publication, *Grant Alerts*, the option of receiving the publication by e-mail, a service for which they (as well as new subscribers) could signup via the website. In 2010 a re-designed website went online, significantly expanding available publications and documents, as well as offering site search capabilities for the first time.

Illinois Commission on Inter-governmental Cooperation (ICIC)

Originally, the Commission's chief functions were to carry forward the state's participation in the Council of State Governments; help state government officials and employees maintain friendly contact with officials and employees of other governments; and advance cooperation between Illinois and other units of government.

Tracking Federal Aid

In 1969, ICIC was designated as the information center for the General Assembly in federal-state relations, and was tasked with compiling and maintaining, analyzing, and publishing information on federal aid available to, pending with, and used by state agencies. In 1977, it was designated as the State Central Information Reception Agency as required by federal circulars. It was also required to work with the Governor's budget office to develop forms, an identification number system, and processes to receive and report information on federal funds received by state agencies. Today, this information is published annually by the LRU in the *Federal Funds to State Agencies* report. It is also reported throughout the year in weekly and quarterly reports.

Midwest Higher Education Compact

In 1991, the Commission was required to report annually to the General Assembly on the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, and make recommendations on continued participation. The LRU continues to issue annual reports on the Compact.

ICIC abolished

The ICIC was abolished in 2003, and all of its personnel and duties were transferred to the LRU.

History of Legislative Council and LRU Governing Boards

As originally formed, the Council had 22 members: 10 senators; 10 representatives; and the President of the Senate (Lieutenant Governor) and Speaker of the House served as *ex-officio* members. The party breakdown was to mirror the breakdown in each chamber, with a maximum of 2/3 from a single party. The size was decreased to 21 in 1967, with only 8 from each chamber; the President pro tempore of the Senate and the minority leaders in the House and Senate were added as *ex-officio* members. Currently, the LRU Governing Board has 12 members. This includes 6 from each chamber, divided equally between Republicans and Democrats. They are listed on the next page.

Co-chairs:

Sen. Larry Bomke (R)

Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D)

Senators

Dan Duffy (R)

David Koehler (D)

Carol Pankau (R)

Ira I. Silverstein (D)

Heather Steans (D)

Representatives

Franco Coladipietro (R)

Constance A. "Connie" Howard (D)

Susanna Mendoza (D)

Chapin Rose (R)

Ed Sullivan, Jr. (R)

Leadership

Between 1937 and 1984, the Council had 24 chairmen and 20 vice-chairmen (including several who served in both positions); the LRU Governing Board has had 6 co-chairs:

<i>Council Chair</i>	<i>Council Vice Chair</i>	<i>Elected</i>
Sen. T.V. Smith (D)	Rep. Edward Saltiel (R)	Oct. 1937
Rep. Benjamin S. Adamowski (D) ¹		May 1938
Sen. Richard J. Barr (R)	Sen. Harold G. Ward (D)	Jun. 1939
Sen. Thomas P. Gunning (R)	Sen. Harold G. Ward (D)	Jul. 1941
Sen. Edward P. Saltiel (R)	Sen. John W. Fribley (D)	Aug. 1943
Sen. John W. Fribley (D) ²		
Rep. Ben S. Rhodes (R)	Sen. Louis E. Beckman (R)	Aug. 1945
Sen. Edward P. Saltiel (R)	Rep. Elroy C. Sandquist (R)	Jul. 1947
Sen. John W. Fribley (D)	Rep. Orville E. Hodge (R)	Sep. 1949
Rep. Orville E. Hodge (R)	Sen. Norman C. Barry (D)	Aug. 1951
Sen. Norman C. Barry (D) ³		
Rep. Robert H. Allison (R)	Sen. Robert W. Lyons (R)	Aug. 1953
Sen. Robert W. Lyons (R) ⁴		
Sen. Robert W. Lyons (R)	Rep. August C. Grebe (R)	Aug. 1955
Rep. W. Dean McCully (R)	Rep. August C. Grebe (R)	Aug. 1957
Rep. Clyde Lee (D)	Sen. Egbert B. Groen (R)	Aug. 1959
Sen. George E. Drach (R)	Rep. Warren L. Wood (R)	Aug. 1961
Rep. Warren L. Wood (R)	Sen. George E. Drach (R)	Sep. 1963
Sen. George E. Drach (R)	Rep. Paul H. Conolly (R)	Sep. 1965
Rep. John H. Conolly (R) ⁵		
Rep. John H. Conolly (R)	Sen. Frank M. Ozinga (R)	Aug. 1967
Rep. John H. Conolly (R)	Sen. Frank M. Ozinga (R)	Sep. 1969
Rep. Tobias Barry (D)	Sen. Frank M. Ozinga (R)	Dec. 1971
Sen. Frank M. Ozinga (R)	Rep. Tobias Barry (D)	Oct. 1973
Rep. Joseph C. Mudd (D)	Sen. Kenneth W. Course (D)	Feb. 1976
Rep. Ted E. Leverenz (D)	Rep. William F. Mahar (R)	Sep. 1977
Sen. Dawn Clark Netsch (D)	Rep. Jacob John Wolf (R)	Oct. 1979
Rep. Jacob John Wolf (R)	Sen. William F. Mahar (R)	Jan. 1982
Sen. William F. Mahar (R) ⁶		Aug. 1982
Rep. Sam Wolf (D)	Sen. John D'Arco (D)	Oct. 1983

<i>LRU Co-Chair</i>	<i>LRU Co-Chair</i>	<i>Elected</i>
Sen. Jack Schaffer (R)	Rep. Sam Wolf (D)	Mar. 1985
Sen. William F. Mahar (R)	Rep. Robert LeFlore, Jr. (D) ⁷	Apr. 1993
Sen. William F. Mahar (R)	Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D)	May 1996
Sen. Larry Bomke (R)	Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D)	Sep. 2004

Notes

1. Rep. Adamowski became chairman due to Sen. Smith's resigning his chairmanship, May 2, 1938.
2. Sen. Fribley became acting chairman.
3. Sen. Barry became acting chairman due to the resignation of Rep. Hodge, who became the Auditor of Public Accounts.
4. Sen. Lyons became acting chairman.
5. Rep. Conolly was made acting chairman due to the death of Sen. Drach.
6. Sen. Mahar was elected chairman due to the resignation of Rep. Wolf, who resigned from the General Assembly effective August 31, 1982.
7. Rep. LeFlore died less than a month after being elected as a co-chairman.

Since 1938, when the research department was first organized, the Legislative Council and the LRU have had 6 directors:

- Charles M. Kneier (1938-1939);
- Jack F. Isakoff (1939-1960);
- William L. Day (1960-1974);
- H. William Hey (1974-1986);
- Patrick D. O'Grady (1986-2010); and
- Alan R. Kroner (2011-current).

This LRU history was updated in January 2011, primarily based on research by Thomas J. Bazan, Research Associate.